

Chapter-9

Ministry of Agriculture

1.1 Introduction

1.1 According to para 15 of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, the most important basic need is “the need of food”. Agriculture sector plays a vital role to meet this need and ensure food and nutritional security. The development vision for agriculture under the 7th Five Year Plan is to ensure food and nutritional security, enhancement of sustainable intensification and diversification of climate resilient agricultural production with increased commercialization, and livelihood improvement through technological innovations and use, strengthening of research and extension system, developing supply chain extension, value addition of agricultural products, and linking farming community with markets, both locally and globally. The Ministry of Agriculture is working to achieve this vision. Agriculture sector is also important for national economic development through the development of agriculture. Its contribution amounts to one fifth percent of the national GDP. It also plays important role for employment generation. Around 45.1% labour force of the country are involved in agricultural work. Ministry of Agriculture is engaged to develop a self-sufficient and sustainable agricultural system by achieving food security, employment generation, poverty eradication and mainstreaming rural economy.

1.2 Women’s role to increase agricultural productivity and achieve food and nutritional security is inevitable. From the ancient period women are part of agriculture. Considering the importance of women’s participation in agriculture sector, the seventh five year plan emphasizes on the elimination of gender discrimination at all stages of food production. At the same time, women’s participation at all stages of decision making has been highlighted. The Ministry of Agriculture is playing very important role to ensure equal participation of women by facilitating agricultural information, loan and offering other opportunities and thereby empowering women.

1.3 Major functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Agricultural research and education program;
- ❖ Agricultural extension and training;
- ❖ Production, standardization, certification, preservation and distribution of quality seeds;
- ❖ Soil survey and examination of the quality of soil, and recommendations;
- ❖ Preservation and marketing of agricultural products;

- ❖ Agricultural support and rehabilitation;
- ❖ Collection, distribution, innovation, procurement and management of agricultural inputs and machinery;
- ❖ Minor irrigation programs.

2.0 Relevant Policies of the Ministry

2.1 National Agriculture Policy, 2013

About half of the total population of our country is female. It is essential that more females enter into government service and join the labour force in agriculture. Since women have ample scope to contribute to agricultural growth, to increase the involvement of women meaningfully in agricultural development and related income generating and human development steps, the activities of the Government will be the following:

- ❖ Women's Empowerment: Necessary assistance will be provided to women's skill development in activities ensuring food and nutrition within the family. Women's participation at decision making process in agricultural management will be encouraged. Efforts will be made as well, to ensure equal rights for women in management of and access to agriculture inputs;
- ❖ Participation in production and marketing: Government will encourage participation of poor women in rural areas in agricultural production, especially in agro-processing and agri-business so that they can improve their economic condition. There will be initiatives to enhance women's technological empowerment in agriculture. Women's participation in agricultural production will be made simpler and facilitated through establishing their rights to access in agricultural technology. Government will also take steps to encourage women's participation in various agriculture extension works such as training, farmers gathering and workshops;
- ❖ Creating opportunity to earn: Government will provide credit to women farmers along with other farmers in agricultural activities like gardening in homestead, post-harvest activities, production and preservation of seeds, nursery, bee keeping, food processing, etc. Micro-credit facilities will also be extended to women in small scale agricultural processing, storage and preservation and efforts will be made to eradicate the wage differential between men and women.

3.0 Ministry Specific Policy Directives in relation to Women's Advancement

3.1 National Women's Development Policy, 2011

- ❖ To establish equal rights for men and women in areas of state and public life according to the Constitution of Bangladesh;

- ❖ To ensure full and equal participation of women in the mainstream socioeconomic development;
- ❖ To educate women and make them and skilled human resources;
- ❖ To recognize appropriately women's contribution in socio-economic spheres;
- ❖ To innovate and import women friendly technologies and discourage the technologies which are unfavorable to women;
- ❖ To provide essential support services essential for the development of women.

3.2 Seventh Five Year Plan

Women are crucial in transformation agricultural products into food and ensure nutritional security in Bangladesh. Gender based inequalities all along the food production chain must be reduced and the active engagement of women at all levels of decision making is absolutely necessary to attain food and nutritional security. Women will require access to information, credit and other business development services in order to capitalize on the new market opportunities along changing or emerging value chains. Capacity building is required to ensure that women remain active and assure important positions in leadership and decision making in economic organizations. Special policies and provision are often required to ensure that women have control over important income generating activities:

- ❖ Developing women friendly technology and business environment;
- ❖ More women's participation in market transaction;
- ❖ Capacity development of women for small-scale entrepreneurs;
- ❖ Collective action and market linkages;
- ❖ Supporting homestead agricultural value addition strategies;
- ❖ Recruit more women agricultural workers and increase their participation in the technology innovation;
- ❖ Protection of women and children from health hazards during agricultural operation.

3.3 Sustainable Development Goals

According to the directives of "Sustainable Development Goals", the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible to end hunger and ensure nutrition of all. At the same time, responsibilities of this ministry include the increase in income of women through equal access to agriculture sector and employment. SDG determines the following targets to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Agriculture as lead ministry:

- ❖ By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round;
- ❖ By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, by, addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons by the year 2015;
- ❖ By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers;
- ❖ Ensure secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets;
- ❖ Create opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

4.0 Strategic Objectives and Activities of the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to Women's Advancement

Serial No.	Medium-Term Strategic Objectives	Activities
1	2	3
1.	Increase production and productivity in the crop sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Promotion of innovated varieties and technologies among the farmers through training, publications and exhibitions/ fairs/rallies/seminars/workshops ❖ Provision of e-agriculture information services ❖ Increasing awareness about food value and nutrition through publications, meetings and workshops
2.	Increase supply and affordability of agricultural inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Supply of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs at administered prices ❖ Procurement of irrigation machinery and facilitating its easy availability
3.	Development and maintenance of agricultural land resource based management	Popularize among the farmers the use of organic fertilizer, green fertilizer and microbe fertilizer
4.	Support in supply, processing and effective marketing of agricultural products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Publicity and preservation of information on agricultural marketing and development; ❖ Development and maintenance of market infrastructure and provide other supports; ❖ Provision of technological support and technical assistance to agricultural entrepreneurs and encouraging them to invest in agro-processing and agri-business; ❖ Coordination between concerned public and private

Serial No.	Medium-Term Strategic Objectives	Activities
1	2	3
		departments/institutions for expansion of marketing facilities of agricultural products.

5.0 Identifying the Gender Gaps in the Activities of the Ministry and Addressing the Issues

5.1 The following gender gaps have been identified in the activities of the Ministry:

- ❖ Although quota system has been introduced in government jobs to empower women, women's participation in government policy making positions has not been commensurate. An analysis of the statistics of male and female officials working in different organizations under the Ministry of Agriculture in 2015-16 fiscal year shows that only 7.0 percent of officers and 10.0 percent of staffs are women;
- ❖ Women's participation in agriculture management is low and they also lag behind in the areas of management of agricultural inputs and its access;
- ❖ There is lack of regular collection, preservation and publication of information about the contribution of women farmers; it is necessary to form organization of women agriculture workers;
- ❖ It is necessary to enact a minimum wage law for women laborers in agriculture to ensure minimum wage of women workers in agriculture on the basis of equal wage for the same job;
- ❖ It is necessary to film documentaries highlighting the role of women in agriculture and all textbooks should contain women's contribution in agriculture;
- ❖ Separate cards should be arranged for women farmers to ensure supply of agriculture inputs, fertilizer, seeds, and credit facilities;
- ❖ It is necessary to apply women friendly modern agricultural technologies and make them available to women farmers;
- ❖ It is necessary to consider gender issue in all development projects/ programs and activities of the ministry of agriculture.

5.2 Strategies to remove the gender gap:

- ❖ Steps have been taken to extend credit facilities to women in agriculture activities to ensure their empowerment;

- ❖ Multi-faceted training on agricultural activities is imparted to women in order to transform them into educated and skilled workforce;
- ❖ Ministry of Agriculture is supporting the establishment of agricultural farms and agro-based industries through women's participation to free the womenfolk from the curse of poverty;
- ❖ Ministry of Agriculture is appropriately rewarding women in different areas alongside men for their contribution in social and economic sphere;
- ❖ Actions are being taken to ensure a supportive environment so that men and women can share equal responsibility in household affairs and productive activities;
- ❖ Women's contribution in agriculture and their commendable entrepreneurial activities are highlighted in the media to build positive image of women. Initiatives are being taken to enhance the relationship between women groups and media organizations to make the latter more gender friendly. These are also telecast in various agriculture related programs;
- ❖ Steps have been taken to Orient agriculture towards improved nutrition and women empowerment;
- ❖ Prepared plans for Women empowerment in production, processing & other income generating activities.

6.0 Women's Participation in Ministry's Activities and their Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

6.1 Statistics of males and females working in Department/Office/Organization under the Ministry

Male and Female Employment Structure by Department/Agencies

	Officers				Staff			
	2016-17		2015-16		2016-17		2015-16	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Administration								
Secretariat	91	18	85	18	72	24	52	17
Department of Agricultural Extension	159	6	159	6	191	47	194	51
Project Implementation Wing	3	0	3	0	18	4	19	4
Field Services Division	411	15	411	15	1222	193	1234	197
Plant Protection Department	62	4	63	5	182	52	185	41
Cash Crop Division - Tobacco & Jute	7	4	7	4	30	8	33	8
Food Crops Division	90	5	90	5	965	55	965	55
Agricultural Education & Training	110	40	110	40	390	115	398	27

	Officers				Staff			
	2016-17		2015-16		2016-17		2015-16	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Upazila Agriculture Office	1648	63	1655	68	14591	1470	14622	1481
Seed Certification Agency	77	9	75	8	151	12	133	15
Cotton Development Board	58	9	63	7	363	33	596	43
Agricultural Information Service	25	1	26	1	151	20	151	18
Department of Agricultural Marketing	25	7	25	7	379	57	379	57
Soil Resource Development Institute	127	28	125	29	304	52	261	34
Total (percent)	2893 (93)	209 (7)	2897 (93)	213 (7)	¹⁹⁰⁰⁹ (90)	2142 (10)	19222 (90)	2048 (10)

6.2 Statistics of beneficiaries in ministry activities:

- ❖ Department of Agriculture Extension has trained 11,95,220 farmers on modern technology of which 18 percent are women;
- ❖ Department of Agriculture marketing has trained 26,280 farmers in the past three years. Loans of about 420.00 crore taka loans have been disbursed among 46,328 entrepreneurs (women entrepreneurs 45 percent).
- ❖ Under Bangladesh Agribusiness Development Project, loans of 259 crore taka have been disbursed among 33,432 agriculture business entrepreneurs of whom 38.31 percent are women.

6.3 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2017-18			Revised 2016-17			Budget 2016-17		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	400266	112019	27.99	317174	86586	27.3	340605	92781	27.24
Ministry Budget	13604	6707	49.3	10379	4888	47.1	13679	6734	49.23
Development	1800	949	52.72	1772	966	54.53	1841	1011	54.93
Non-Development	11804	5758	48.78	8607	3922	45.57	11838	5723	48.34

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement in three years

7.1 Impact of Medium Term Strategic Objectives on Women Development

- ❖ **Increased production and productivity in the crop sector:** The participation of the female members of the farming families are increasing in the process of increasing productivity of food grain. This in turn creating more opportunity for women to be involved in the production of high value crops. As a result, employment opportunity would be created for women and this will further

increase the access of women and children to nutritious food. Targeted activities in agriculture such as cultivation of fruits and vegetables in the homestead, programmes related to crop expansion, production and preservation of seeds will create employment opportunities for them, which will increase their income and elevate their social status.

- ❖ **Increased supply and affordability of agricultural inputs:** Increase in the agricultural production has offered opportunity to women to involve in the agriculture. This will create employment opportunity for women.
- ❖ **Development and maintenance of agricultural land resource based management:** Women's involvement in producing compost and organic fertilizer will create employment opportunities for them and increase their income.
- ❖ **Support in supply, processing and effective marketing of agricultural products:** Increased participation of women in target-oriented agro-processing and agri-business has created employment opportunities for them. These are increasing women's share in the labor market and enhancing their social status and establishing their rights in government property and service.

7.2 Ministry's Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- ❖ In almost all the families, women's participation in agricultural activities is increasing. The involvement of women in the production of high value crop and food grain will create employment opportunity for them and this will further increase the access of women and children to nutritious food. Targeted activities in agriculture such as fruits and vegetables in homestead, production and preservation of seeds will create employment and income opportunities for women and elevate their social status. Women's involvement in the production of compost and organic fertilizer will create employment opportunities for them and increase their income.
- ❖ Farmers of 64 districts of Bangladesh are planting mushrooms, and a total of 36,075 women are participating in mushroom-based income generating activities promoted by National Mushroom Centre, Savar and other 16 sub-centers across the country. Under Northwest Crop Diversification Project, a corner for women has been marked in 60 growers' markets and 15 wholesale markets. Bangladesh Agri-Business Development Project was implemented with the financial support of Asian Development Bank. Under this project, Taka 259 crore was distributed in the form of loans to 33,432 of agro business entrepreneurs; 38.31 percent of these entrepreneurs are women. These are increasing women's participation in labor market. This will elevate their social status and establish their right in public property and services.
- ❖ Women make a significant contribution in the production of crops and the Ministry of Agriculture recognizes its importance adequately. A large number of

women scientists are receiving higher education and training at home and abroad from different projects and programs of the ministry. Apart from this, employment opportunities have been created for women through training a large number of them on seed production and preservation, cultivating vegetables and fruits in homesteads, processing and preservation of fruits and vegetables organized, under different projects and programs, as well as under core research activities of the research organizations under the Ministry. As a result, a large number of women are motivated to participate at different stages of production, and are making significant contribution in agricultural production.

7.3 Women's Non-wage Labour in Agriculture:

In agriculture, women are contributing significantly at different stages of crop production. Women are actively participating in production and preservation of seeds, processing and preservation of crops, cultivating vegetables and fruits in homesteads. But, these non-wage activities of the women are not properly recognized. It is necessary to recognize these non-wage activities of the women properly in social and economic sphere.

Success story of a woman in Agriculture:

Nibha Rani Biswas, wife of Nikhil Kumar Bishwas and daughter of Nani Bala Biswas, is an inhabitant of the village of Raghunathpur and Post office of Helanchi in Manirampur Upazila of Jessore district. She is playing a unique role to promote the society as well as the country through agricultural activities. Last year, she established a garden of 6 thousand date palm trees in 3 hectares of land. Besides, she cultivated mug/mung dal in 10 decimal of land around her house. Thus she has earned 15,300 taka. Moreover, she organized local women to establish date palm garden, cultivation of vegetables and to do various agricultural extension works. For such initiatives she received the prize of the best woman entrepreneur at upazila level in 2015. Recently she is continuing agricultural extension works by introducing Jalalpur-Raghunathpur Mahila CIG (crop) cooperative society consists of woman of the area. Being encouraged by her, the women of the area are coming forward for the development of agriculture. In recognition to her contribution to agriculture, Nibha Rani Biswas was awarded a gold medal of Bangabandhu Jatiyo Krishi Puroskar in 1420.

8.0 Obstacles to achieve targets related to Women's Advancement and Rights

- ❖ Women engaged in agriculture work are not recognized as farmers.
- ❖ Inadequate supply of agricultural input, training and low interest credit facility.
- ❖ Lack of marketing facilities for agricultural products.

- ❖ Lack of women friendly environment in markets.
- ❖ Inadequacy of necessary technical support and agriculture support services.

9.0 Progress on Recommended Activities in the Previous Year

Sl. No.	Recommendations	Progress
1	2	3
1	Ensure that women are recognized as farmers.	The process to recognize women as farmers is ongoing.
2	Introduce input cards for female farmers (like male farmers), ensure opportunity to open an account with a minimum deposit, provision of training, access to agriculture credit, ensuring the availability of other existing facilities;	Farmers are getting credits under second crop diversification project and 60 percent of the recipients are women. Women are being in while receiving the loan and its management.
3	Provide women with training on production and storage of seeds, cultivation and preservation of mushroom, planting seedlings and saplings, horticultural seed development, homestead gardening, production of bio and compost fertilizer, preservation and marketing of vegetable and fruits. Supply women with microcredit and create employment opportunities for them;	A large number of women are involved in cultivating vegetables at homestead, processing as well as preservation of vegetables and fruits under the research activities in different agriculture research institutes under B.A.R.C. Women cultivators are encouraged to involve in the programme for production and preservation of jute seeds.
4	Create women-friendly environment to facilitate marketing of agricultural products, and develop and expand woman-friendly environment in the existing and new markets;	Community groups comprising of at least 30 percent women members have been formed association to facilitate marketing of agriculture products under the second crop diversification project. Under this project a total of 159000 women are being trained on market conditions, value addition, and commodity prices.

Sl. No.	Recommendations	Progress
1	2	3
5	<p>Improve the socio-economic condition of poor and destitute women living in flood, drought, saline-prone areas and coastal regions. Support these women by supplying agricultural inputs, and providing training and credit support with low interest rates as a part of post-natural disaster rehabilitation.</p>	<p>As part of post-disaster rehabilitation program supply of free agriculture inputs, training and credit at low interest rates are continuing.</p>
6	<p>In the aim to involve more women in agro-processing and agri-business, provide support to develop women as entrepreneurs, provide training and loan support with low interest rates to create employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has trained 5,50,700 women in technology of crop production, comprehensive pest management, post-harvest preservation and management of crops and marketing. Under the second crop diversification project 123909 women have been provided 10,000 - 35,000 taka for the production, preservation and management of crops. Women workers have been trained in small and cottage industry based jute products.</p>
7	<p>Consider gender issue in all developmental projects and programs of the Agriculture Ministry</p>	<p>Gender issues are actively considered while adopting development projects in the Ministry of Agriculture. Second crop diversification project has developed Gender Equality Strategy Paper for the Department of Agricultural Extension that has been published in September, 2016.</p>
8	<p>Provide all types of agricultural support services to women so that they are able to undertake homestead cultivation activities in an effective manner.</p>	<p>DAE and research institutions are providing technical support, training, and financial assistance for cultivating vegetables and fruits at homesteads.</p>

10.0 Proposal for future activities

- ❖ To take steps/initiatives to come forward for the development of agricultural activities for ensuring the economic empowerment of women;
- ❖ To impart multi-faced training to women on agricultural activities in order to transform them into educated and skilled workforce;
- ❖ To support the establishment of agricultural farms and agro-based industries by Ministry of Agriculture through women's participation to free the womenfolk from the curse of poverty;
- ❖ To reward women in different areas alongside men for their contribution in social and economic sphere by Ministry of Agriculture;
- ❖ To take action to ensure a supportive environment so that men and women can share equal responsibility in household affairs and productive activities;
- ❖ To highlight women's contribution in agriculture and their commendable entrepreneurial activities in the media to build up positive image of women. To take initiatives to enhance the relationship between women groups and media organizations for making the later more gender friendly. To telecast all these through various agriculture related programs.